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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9676
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; May 6, 2009

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Politicians Face Summons in "Park Yeon-cha Bribery Scandal"

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

According to an ROKG official, the ROKG will approve a package of measures to support reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan during today's Cabinet meeting. The measures will include sending police officers to assist with security operations in the war-torn country and donating security and medical equipment worth \$5 million.
(Chosun, Dong-a, Hankyoreh, Segye, all TVs)

According to an ROKG source, the two Koreas are discussing the schedule and agenda for the second round of talks on the joint Kaesong Industrial Complex. (JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankook, Hankyoreh, Segye, Seoul)

A month after the launch of the (U.S.-ROK) WEST (Work, English Study, and Travel) Program, Dong-a Ilbo featured a story quoting participants who expressed satisfaction with the program's systematic language classes and good prospects for internships in the U.S.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy, will visit countries involved in the Six-Party Talks beginning today. He is expected to come to Seoul on May 8 after visiting China on May 7. (Hankook, all TVs)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

- Troop Deployment to Afghanistan

Citing an ROKG official, most ROK media reported that the ROKG will approve a package of measures to support reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan during today's Cabinet meeting. The measures will include sending police officers to help security operations in the war-torn country and donating security and medical equipment worth \$5 million, according to media reports.

In a related development, right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo

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editorialized on May 5: "The situation in Afghanistan is getting increasingly worse. Outside the capital, Kabul, many parts of the country are largely under the control of the Taliban, which is rapidly expanding its influence over the southeastern area bordering Pakistan. It is understandable that the U.S., which is in desperate need of help, has asked the ROK, one of its allies, to offer assistance. However, any decision to dispatch Korean troops to Afghanistan should not be based purely on loyalty. The lives of Koreans are at stake. ... Once in Afghanistan, soldiers will have to risk their lives to fight Taliban soldiers, which is why we cannot be too careful about future redeployment. This is also the reason why America's European allies have been reluctant to embrace U.S. calls for help in Afghanistan."

Moderate Seoul Shimun's editorial observed today: "The U.S. administration should look favorably towards the ROKG's measures to support Afghanistan, which came after Seoul's serious consideration of both public opinion against troop redeployment and its role as a U.S. ally. Washington should refrain from pressuring the ROKG by demanding excessive financial aid because Seoul does not send its troops to Afghanistan or by requesting troop deployment again. Separately from the decision on (providing assistance to) Afghanistan, the ROKG should make every effort to call the attention of the Obama Administration to the issue of North Korea. ... The Obama Administration's strategy of ignoring North Korea should be seen as part of its efforts to focus on foreign policy priorities regarding Iran and Afghanistan, rather than be dragged along by North Korea. ... The ROKG must focus the attention of the U.S. administration on North Korea and at the same time enhance the cooperative framework with the U.S. in order to devise the right policy toward North Korea. Cooperation on North Korea should come before the issue of Afghanistan."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

Lives on the Line
(JoongAng Ilbo, May 5, 2009, Page 34)

The redeployment of troops to Afghanistan will almost certainly be on the agenda at the South Korea-U.S. summit on June 16 in Washington, D.C., now that the issue has resurfaced in the Korean media. The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry here said the United States has not actually asked for redeployment and thus Seoul is not reviewing that possibility. But when what's really going on is so obvious, sweeping the issue under the carpet is not the answer. The

Korean government should not be forced to make a hasty decision on this matter after agonizing over it for some time.

The situation in Afghanistan is getting increasingly worse. Outside of the capital, Kabul, many parts of the country are largely under the control of the Taliban, which is rapidly expanding its influence over the southeastern area bordering Pakistan. It is understandable that the U.S., which is in desperate need of help, has asked South Korea, one of its allies, to offer assistance. However, any decision to dispatch South Korean troops to Afghanistan should not be based purely on loyalty. The lives of Koreans are at stake, and this will have great influence over public sentiment.

Some would say having Korean soldiers in Afghanistan would not be a problem since our Zaytun troops have already served in Iraq. But this is an uninformed view. Afghanistan is not Iraq. There is no equivalent Green Zone, a relatively safe area within Baghdad. Once in Afghanistan, soldiers will have to risk their lives to fight Taliban soldiers, which is why we cannot be too careful about future redeployment. This is also the reason why America's European allies have been reluctant to embrace U.S. calls for help in Afghanistan.

For now, the Korean government plans to increase the size of the Provincial Reconstruction Team from 24 members to 90. It will also expand civilian support. The United States appears to understand Korea's plight and may not be pressing hard for redeployment just right now. The best case scenario for us would be to end this discussion by merely upping our financial support. But we can't rule out the possibility that the situation in Afghanistan could

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deteriorate further. As such, the government should not categorically declare that redeployment will not take place. Whether Washington's call for help has been made through an official or an unofficial channel, the government should be open with the public and then try to persuade the people if necessary.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

U.S., ROK Should Put Cooperation on North Korea before Cooperation on Afghanistan
(Seoul Shinmun, May 6, 2009, Page 27)

The ROKG will announce a plan to provide reconstruction aid for Afghanistan today. It reportedly plans to increase the number of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) from about 20 to 300 and expand in-kind support through the Official Development Assistance (ODA). It is fortunate that the ROKG sidestepped the (the issue of) redeploying troops to Afghanistan, a controversial issue for Koreans, and chose (instead) to offer personnel, equipment and capital for the reconstruction efforts. When dealing with the issue of Afghanistan, where two innocent civilians died just about a year ago, the ROKG should give top priority to justification and national interests. In this sense, our judgment is that troop redeployment is neither justified nor conforms to our national interests.

With the U.S.-ROK summit slated for next month, the provision of aid to Afghanistan is emerging as an unavoidable pending issue. The U.S. administration should look favorably towards the ROKG's measures to support Afghanistan, which came after Seoul's serious consideration of both public opinion against troop redeployment and its role as a U.S. ally. Washington should refrain from pressuring the ROKG by demanding excessive financial aid because Seoul does not send its troops to Afghanistan or by requesting troop deployment again.

Separately from the decision on (providing assistance to) Afghanistan, the ROKG should make every effort to call the attention of the Obama Administration to the issue of North Korea.. If the issue of Afghanistan is a top foreign policy issue for U.S. President Obama, the North Korean issue is an urgent task facing us. Although the North, which launched a rocket and restarted the Yongbyon nuclear facilities, is now destroying the Six-Party framework by threatening to conduct a second nuclear test,

(Secretary) Clinton's foreign policy team is simply ratcheting up its rhetoric without any clear countermeasure.

The Obama Administration's strategy of ignoring the North should be seen as part of its efforts to focus on foreign policy priorities regarding Iran and Afghanistan, rather than be dragged along by North Korea. However, this should not be the case. The ROKG must focus the attention of the U.S. administration on North Korea and at the same time enhance the cooperative framework with the U.S. in order to devise the right policy toward North Korea. Cooperation on North Korea should come before the issue of Afghanistan.

FEATURES

WEST Participants Are "Satisfied with Language Classes"...
"Prospects for Internships Are Good"
(Dong-a Ilbo, May 6, 2009, Page 5)

By Reporter Hwang Kyu-in

One Month after the WEST Program

"Through the WEST Program, you can study TOEIC in a systematic way... Homestay is good but rather costly... Gathering information before departure is the key to success."

Jin Min-hee (23, a senior majoring in food science and technology at Pusan National University) takes an English conversation class

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everyday on the 63rd floor of the Empire State Building in New York in the U.S. When she does not have a class, she visits fashion brand shops, such as Zara and Forever 21, H&M. Jin said, "Because I have been very interested in the advanced Virtual Merchandising (VMD) system, I am also pleased to see and learn about it in person."

Jin, who had never been abroad before joining the WEST (Work, English Study, and Travel) Program as one of the first participants, arrived in the U.S. at the end of March. In addition to Jin, other WEST participants - Suh In-suk (26, a senior majoring in journalism at Hanyang University), Ahn Su-jin (22, a junior majoring in law at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies), Lee Suk-kyun (26, a sophomore majoring in creative advertising at Seoul Institute of the Arts) and Ban Ji-eun (23, a senior majoring in English language and literature at Kangnung-Wonju National University) - told Dong-a Ilbo about their month-long stay in the U.S.

They all said, "In order to reduce mistakes, future WEST participants should gather as much information as possible in the ROK before leaving for the U.S." The second group of participants will leave at the end of August.

Systematic English classes

Most of the 190 participants of the first group (in the WEST program) will finish taking the language course by September. Ahn is taking the TOEIC class at Intrax International Institute in San Francisco. She said, "At first, I was not happy with the class because I had taken the same TOEIC class in the ROK. However, the class here is different, as it does not simply give an answer but tells us why it is the answer in a systematic way." Language institutes provide a variety of classes focused on speaking, business communication and internship programs for students who have different levels of language proficiency. Ban, who had studied at Tennessee State University as an exchange student last year, noted, "Now that I do not have school work to do, I feel less burdened," adding, "I am pleased to have a chance to study business English, not daily conversation." WEST participants say they are unhappy that there are so many Korean students in language classes. Lee said, "Since Korean students are accustomed to rote learning, they often have difficulty participating in discussion, depriving the debate class of its vitality. In Chicago, some classes are only composed of WEST participants."

In higher level classes, there are more non-Korean students thereby giving the WEST participants more opportunity to to actively participate in the class. Suh said, "Even in January and February, the selection period for the first batch of WEST participants, I continued to study English hard by preparing for the TOEIC test and listening to English speeches, and that seemed to be very helpful when I took the level test." Among the WEST participants studying at Intrax, Suh is the only one qualified to take the ESL Level 10 class.

They favor staying in apartments.

In the U.S., WEST participants live with homestay families or stay in dormitories or apartments. Homestays or apartments are preferable to dormitories. Many dormitory facilities are not worth the (high) cost, and the homestay arrangement is satisfactory but costly. Suh lived with homestay families until April, but starting this month, he lives in a rental apartment. In most cases, three Korean students or two Koreans and one foreigner share an apartment. Lee also said, "Before leaving the ROK, I applied for the homestay program but cancelled it, and now I am living with a Korean roommate. This is much more comfortable."

Getting an internship is the key.

The Global Internship Support Task in charge of the WEST Program and (ROK) consulates in the U.S. are actively helping program participants adjust to life in the U.S. Some language institutes with many WEST participants have prepared a separate counter

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exclusively for the WEST Program.

Now, the last remaining hurdle is to get an internship. Sponsors of the program are receiving the profiles of WEST participants and searching for companies to provide internships opportunities. WEST participants say, "Contrary to previous concerns, sponsors are making active efforts to find internships for us. The levels of internships are expected to vary depending on our command of English." Now, the Global Internship Support Task is recruiting the second group of participants. If you are interested in the program, you can contact the international programs office at each university.

STANTON